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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2211 (2015), in which the Council requested me to report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It covers developments since the issuance of my report of 22 September 2015 (S/2015/735) and provides information on peace and security developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region until 29 February 2016.

II. Major developments

A. Political and security developments

2. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is entering its third year of implementation. Progress in the implementation of regional and national commitments remains limited, while the continued presence of illegal armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri (FRPI) and several Mai-Mai militias, continues to threaten the security and stability of the region and negatively affects the implementation of the Framework. Furthermore, there was little progress towards the repatriation and demobilization of ex-combatants, including from the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and FDLR, registered during the reporting period. The crisis in Burundi and its far-reaching impact have also contributed to the deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region.

[1] In this context, the region is defined as covering the 13 signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations. For further information, see S/2013/119 and S/2013/131, annex.

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3. Notwithstanding the aforementioned challenges, the region witnessed some positive developments during the reporting period. These included largely peaceful general elections in the Central African Republic, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Office of my Special Envoy, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the African Union and other partners, organized the first Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa on 24 and 25 February 2016. The highly successful event attracted some 500 participants, including government officials, private sector actors, development partners and experts. I attended the opening ceremony, alongside President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Vice-President of Angola, representing the Chair of ICGLR; and the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, representing the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

4. Another significant development was the signing, on 28 January, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) of a technical arrangement related to the resumption of military cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)) and MONUSCO.

5. With regard to the neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, FARDC continued operations against FDLR, the Allied Democratic Forces and FRPI, as indicated in my reports on MONUSCO issued in December 2015 (S/2015/1031) and March 2016. At the twelfth meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi on 14 January 2016, the Congolese delegation reported that, of the Congolese Government's estimate of 1,200 FDLR combatants, 1,150 had been neutralized. Among those, 150 were awaiting repatriation to Rwanda. The delegation further attributed the recent upsurge in violations and abuses in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to the remaining FDLR elements, the breakaway FDLR-Ralliement pour l'unité et la démocratie, Nduma Defence of Congo/Guidon (NDC/Guidon) and other groups with alleged ties to the former M23. During the meeting, the Congolese delegation also reiterated its call on the international community to help identify third countries for relocation of FDLR combatants and dependants who had surrendered but were unwilling to return to Rwanda. The delegation stressed the urgent need to repatriate or relocate to third countries all ex-FDLR combatants and dependants currently in transit camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. Almost two years after the signing of the Nairobi Declarations by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the former M23 rebel group, implementation remains stalled. Hundreds of ex-M23 combatants are yet to be repatriated from Rwanda and Uganda.

7. On 23 October 2015, ex-M23 political leader Bertrand Bisimwa issued a statement asserting that the former rebel group would not continue to honour its commitments under the Nairobi Declarations on the grounds that the Government had deliberately refused to implement its part of the agreement. He further stated that the former rebel group would not accept any attempt to repatriate ex-combatants outside the provisions of the Nairobi Declarations. Mr. Bisimwa also

communicated similar messages to the Chairs of ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), respectively. He further noted that failure to fully implement past agreements between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and rebel movements had ultimately caused the outbreak of new rebellions.

8. On 24 October 2015, the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued a communiqué in reaction to the statement by the former rebel group. The National Oversight Mechanism denounced the lack of will by ex-M23 leaders and recalled the Congolese Government's efforts to fulfil its commitments, notably by promulgating an amnesty law in February 2014 and by initiating the repatriation of consenting ex-M23 combatants. The National Oversight Mechanism also recalled the decision by the sixth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, warning ex-M23 leaders against obstructing the repatriation process. On 10 November, Mr. Bisimwa appointed Désiré Rwigema as the new ex-M23 coordinator tasked to oversee the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations in close coordination with the National Oversight Mechanism. Mr. Rwigema replaced René Abandi, who had stepped down as coordinator in January 2015 and is now in charge of transforming the former rebel group into a political party.

9. In order to overcome these challenges, the leaders of the region have continued to push for the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. On 18 November 2015, the Ministers of Defence of ICGLR member States met in Kinshasa to discuss this matter, in compliance with the decision of the ninth ICGLR Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Luanda on 18 May 2015. The Ministers reviewed the calendar for the repatriation of the remaining ex-M23 combatants in Uganda and noted that repatriation should commence on 1 December 2015 and be concluded by 15 December 2015. Following this decision, a task force, comprising representatives of the ICGLR secretariat, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Uganda People's Defence Force, the Ministry of Defence of Angola (as Chair of ICGLR), MONUSCO and the Office of my Special Envoy, visited Bihanga camp in Uganda from 3 to 15 December 2015.

10. During the visit, the delegation was informed that 646 ex-M23 combatants were present, 490 were recorded as absent, 14 had been admitted to a hospital, 29 had received permission to leave the camp, 9 were in Kampala, 5 were under arrest for crimes and various wrongdoings and 4 had died. The task force urged the ex-M23 combatants present to seize the opportunity to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In response, ex-M23 combatants appealed to the witnesses/guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework not to focus solely on the issue of repatriation and to ensure instead that all provisions of the Nairobi Declarations are fully implemented. Following the field mission, 13 ex-M23 combatants were repatriated to the Kamina military base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of MONUSCO. This brought the number of ex-M23 combatants repatriated from Uganda to a total of 195. A total of 309 ex-M23 combatants are still present in Rwanda. No repatriation from Rwanda took place during the period under review. The aforementioned task force visited Rwanda on 23 and 24 September 2015. During the visit, the Ministers of Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met bilaterally and issued a joint communiqué on 24 September (see para. 24 below).

11. On the political front, on 28 November 2015, President Joseph Kabila announced the convening of a national dialogue to discuss forthcoming electoral processes in the country. Some opposition groups and civil society organizations opposed the President's proposal for a dialogue. On 4 January 2016, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also called for a national dialogue and announced the formation of a special committee tasked with maintaining contact with political parties, encouraging mutual trust and advancing initiatives aimed at enhancing the electoral process. On 14 January, the African Union issued a statement supporting the national dialogue and urging all Congolese to reach a consensus that would preserve the gains made in the areas of peace, stability, security, development and democratization. The African Union further requested Edem Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo and member of the African Union Panel of the Wise, to travel to Kinshasa for consultations on the national dialogue. On 16 February, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie issued a joint statement urging all Congolese political actors to spare no effort, within the framework of the country's Constitution, to ensure the successful holding of elections, preserve peace and deepen democracy, including through a political process. The four organizations also underscored the importance of dialogue and the need for political actors to reach an agreement that upholds democracy and the rule of law. In addition, they urged all Congolese political actors to extend their full cooperation to Mr. Kodjo.

12. The crisis in Burundi remained a focus of attention for the region and the international community during the period under review. On 28 December 2015, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, presided over the ceremony for the relaunching of the inter-Burundian dialogue in Entebbe, Uganda, on behalf of the East African Community (EAC). Participants included representatives of the Government of Burundi, the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, opposition actors from within and outside the country, civil society and faith-based organizations. Also in attendance were officials from the African Union, EAC, the European Union, the United Nations and the diplomatic corps. President Museveni encouraged the parties to engage in dialogue and to find a political solution to the ongoing crisis. He invited the parties to resume talks in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, on 6 January 2016. The Government of Burundi, however, expressed concern about the proposed date and the participants in the dialogue. Acting on behalf of President Museveni, the Minister of Defence of Uganda, Crispus Kiyonga, supported by the Tanzanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Augustin Mahiga, in his capacity as Chair of the EAC Council of Ministers, consulted the Government of Burundi in order to reach consensus on the resumption of the dialogue. At the time of finalization of the present report, consultations were still ongoing.

13. On 9 November, I appointed Jamal Benomar as my Special Adviser. Since his appointment, Mr. Benomar has focused his attention on coordinating United Nations efforts to help resolve the crisis in Burundi. He travelled to Burundi several times and met senior Government officials, opposition leaders, civil society and the diplomatic corps. He also visited Uganda to engage the Facilitator of the EAC-led dialogue and travelled to Rwanda and the African Union headquarters in Ethiopia.

14. The situation in Burundi also featured prominently in the agenda of the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committees of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the

ICGLR held in Luanda on 10 and 11 February 2016. The Ministers of Defence and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of ICGLR member States reviewed the security situation in the region, notably in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs also took the opportunity to review a list of candidates for the post of Executive Secretary of ICGLR to replace Alphonse Ntumba Luaba of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose tenure ended in December 2015. At the request of the Government of Angola, the sixth Ordinary Summit of the ICGLR was rescheduled to the end of March 2016.

B. Humanitarian situation

15. The humanitarian situation resulting from the influx of some 245,000 refugees from Burundi into neighbouring countries since April 2015 remains a matter of concern and priority. Countries in the subregion, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been hosting large refugee populations and deserve greater international support to attend to the needs of the refugees. The reported recruitment of Burundian youth for armed groups, including in refugee camps, directly undermines the civilian character of asylum and strains relations between Governments in the region. Inside Burundi, the crisis has exacerbated the situation faced by an already vulnerable population that includes 25,000 internally displaced persons. Protection of civilians is a growing concern; over 445 people have been killed since violence erupted in April 2015. The country's instability has also caused the deterioration of already fragile livelihoods, with the result that some 3.6 million people are considered food insecure and 150,000 children under 5 years of age acutely malnourished.

16. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo also remains dire, especially in the eastern provinces, where new displacement has occurred daily, owing to the activities of armed groups, military operations against them, ongoing intercommunal violence and the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. Some 1.5 million people have been internally displaced, while 7.5 million people are in need of assistance throughout the country. The forced closure of the site for internally displaced persons in Mukoto, North Kivu, on 12 January 2016 caused new displacement. The humanitarian community has offered to support the Government to ensure that it upholds its international obligations on human rights and humanitarian principles, especially with regard to the closure of sites for internally displaced persons.

17. Meanwhile, over 400,000 Congolese refugees remain in protracted exile in neighbouring countries. The conflict in South Sudan has also caused the displacement of nearly 5,000 South Sudanese refugees from the state of Western Equatoria in South Sudan to Dungu territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

C. Human rights and judicial cooperation

18. The rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Burundi remains a key concern. On 17 December 2015, the Human Rights Council, in its resolution S-24/1, called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a mission to swiftly investigate alleged violations and abuses in Burundi

and make recommendations to improve the situation. The African Union also committed to deploy human rights observers and military experts to the country.

19. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, security and intelligence officers have reportedly clamped down on activists and political opponents opposed to changes to the country's constitutional provision on presidential term limits. As indicated above, the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains volatile, with armed groups, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces and FDLR, carrying out deadly attacks on civilians and committing acts of sexual violence.

20. Efforts to hold individuals accountable for crimes committed in the region are ongoing and demonstrate effective cooperation in judicial matters. The trial of Bosco Ntaganda, who was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Ituri province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 2002 and 2003, commenced in September 2015 at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. On 19 December 2015, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Germain Katanga were transferred to a prison facility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to serve their respective prison sentences. This is the first time that the Court has designated a State for the enforcement of prison sentences and demonstrates close cooperation between the Court and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 30 December, new charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity were filed against Germain Katanga in the High Military Court in Kinshasa. This is the first case in which new national proceedings have been brought against an individual already convicted by the International Criminal Court.

21. In January 2016, a hearing was held at the International Criminal Court in The Hague to determine whether to confirm war crimes and crimes against humanity charges, including sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers in Uganda, against former Lord's Resistance Army leader Dominic Ongwen. The Court also announced that it would issue its verdict in the case of Jean-Pierre Bemba, former President and Commander-in-Chief of the Mouvement de libération du Congo on 21 March 2016. Mr. Bemba was charged for crimes allegedly committed in the Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003.

III. Implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

22. Information on the status of implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contained in my report on MONUSCO of 9 March 2016 (S/2016/233).

B. Commitments of the region

23. Most signatory States to the Framework upheld their commitment "not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries" (see S/2013/131, annex) during the reporting period; however, the Government of Burundi has accused its Rwandan counterpart of recruiting young people in refugee camps in Rwanda and

encouraging incursions into Burundi by armed elements through the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

24. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda held a bilateral meeting in Kigali on 23 and 24 September to review the security challenges facing the two countries and agree on comprehensive strategies to address them. In a joint communiqué, they: (a) called on the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the two countries, supported by their respective military intelligence units, to develop practical ways to eradicate FDLR; (b) requested the establishment of a joint bilateral team on repatriation of ex-M23 combatants cantoned in Rwanda and FDLR combatants present in the Bahuma transit camp in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and (c) agreed to hold bilateral ministerial security meetings on a regular basis. National and international institutions were invited to support the process. The implementation of the decisions adopted during the meeting is still pending.

25. With regard to the commitment made by signatory States to facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation (ibid.), the Congolese National Police arrested Ladislas Ntaganzwa on 8 December 2015, pursuant to an arrest warrant and order to transfer issued by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals on 7 May 2014. Mr. Ntaganzwa had been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, and crimes against humanity, in connection with his actions during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He had been at large since 19 June 1996 and was allegedly living in North Kivu under the protection of FDLR.

26. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has expressed its readiness to extradite Mr. Ntaganzwa to Rwanda pursuant to the warrant, provided, however, that the Government of Rwanda reciprocates by transferring the former leader of the National Congress for the Defence of the People, Laurent Nkunda, as well as other Congolese nationals who are the subject of arrest warrants issued by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On a related note, little progress was made in bringing to justice six ex-M23 members who are sought on Congolese arrest warrants for war crimes and crimes against humanity and who are also listed on sanctions lists of the Security Council and the Government of the United States of America.

C. International commitments

27. As part of their collective effort to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Team of International Envoys and Representatives for the Great Lakes Region visited Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda from 9 to 15 December 2015. Their planned visit to Burundi was cancelled following a request by the Government to postpone this segment of the journey. The team comprised Assistant Secretary-General Modibo Touré, representing Special Envoy Said Djinnit; my Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, Maman Sidikou; the United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Thomas Perriello; the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region, Koen Vervaeke; and a representative of the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region.

28. In their interaction with various regional stakeholders, the envoys expressed concern over the worsening security situation in Burundi, as well as the rise in violence and human rights abuses. They expressed their support for the EAC-led mediation. The envoys also conducted field visits to Kisangani, Beni and Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Beni, the envoys met with the mayor and members of his local security committee. They seized the opportunity to extend their condolences to the local community, which continues to bear the brunt of atrocities committed by the Allied Democratic Forces. In Kisangani, the envoys met with a group of ex-FDLR elements cantoned in Bahuma camp and encouraged them to accept being repatriated to Rwanda, their country of origin, without precondition. In Goma, the envoys met the Vice-Governor of North Kivu, among others. The discussions revolved around the neutralization of armed groups, with a focus on the FARDC-led operations against FDLR and other local armed groups. Both sides agreed on the urgent need to resume military cooperation between MONUSCO and FARDC. The envoys and representatives were also briefed on the work of the Extended Joint Verification Mechanism by the body's Deputy Commander.

29. The implementation of the World Bank Great Lakes Initiative, for a total commitment of $1.4 billion, has significantly advanced during the reporting period. Six projects costing $717.2 million, which are intended to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, on the one hand, and improve economic opportunities through economic cooperation and integration, on the other, have been approved and are in the early stages of implementation. Four other projects in the same areas, costing $537 million, are at an advanced stage of preparation.

30. A number of analytical studies, funded by the World Bank and the Office of my Special Envoy, were helpful in designing projects under the Great Lakes Initiative. These included studies in the following areas: (a) addressing forced displacement; (b) improving social protection for vulnerable groups, including women; (c) enhancing food security; (d) improving access to health services; (e) supporting demobilization and reintegration of armed groups; (f) enhancing access to energy; (g) improving agricultural productivity; (h) expanding infrastructure to support increased productivity and trade; and (i) removing barriers to trade.

D. Oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

31. The Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework met on 14 January 2016 in Nairobi to review developments in the region, notably the dialogue processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the peace process in South Sudan. The Committee also discussed the neutralization of negative forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces. The meeting further reviewed the matter of the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants from Uganda and Rwanda and the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations.

32. Building on lessons from previous high-level Regional Oversight Mechanism meetings and on the outcomes of the ministerial retreat on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi on 10 July 2015, members of the Technical Support Committee considered proposals to improve the meetings of the Mechanism and the Committee and to strengthen ownership of the Framework by its signatories.

The Committee's recommendations were submitted to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the region for consideration.

33. On 28 January 2016, my Special Envoy and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security convened a ministerial meeting of signatory States and witnesses/guarantors of the Framework, in the margins of the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the African Union Executive Council, held in Addis Ababa on 27 and 28 January. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola. Participants included the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. South Africa was represented by its Minister of Defence and Uganda was represented by its Minister for Regional Cooperation. The Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and the Sudan were represented by senior officials from their Ministries for Foreign Affairs and Defence. In addition, representatives of the African Union, ICGLR, SADC and the United Nations participated. Participants reviewed developments in the region and discussed steps to enhance ownership and strengthen the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

34. The Ministers also endorsed the recommendations of the Technical Support Committee to strengthen the governing mechanisms of the Framework, notably by: (a) dissociating the Regional Oversight Mechanism meetings from the African Union summit and the United Nations General Assembly; (b) organizing one annual meeting of the Mechanism as a stand-alone event in a signatory State; (c) convening thematic ministerial meetings, as necessary, to address relevant challenges; and (d) convening meetings of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, ahead of future meetings of the Mechanism, to lay the groundwork for subsequent discussions and decisions by Heads of State and Government.

35. The ministerial meeting further welcomed the recent elections in the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the progress achieved in the peace process in South Sudan. It also welcomed progress in the peace process in the Central African Republic and urged the parties to continue their efforts. Participants expressed their full support for the ongoing EAC-led dialogue on Burundi. They further welcomed the decision by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to resume military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO.

IV. Activities of my Special Envoy

36. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy continued to promote the implementation of key aspects of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. His office successfully organized the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference on 24 and 25 February 2016 in Kinshasa in partnership with ICGLR. Furthermore, my Special Envoy undertook consultations to support national dialogue processes in the region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also continued to support the neutralization of negative forces and used his good offices to facilitate the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, particularly the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants from Rwanda and Uganda. My Special Envoy also took steps to strengthen his collaboration with regional organizations, promote women, youth and civil society, and help find durable solutions to refugee issues in the region.

A. Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference

37. During the period under review, my Special Envoy proceeded with preparations for the first Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. In October 2015, his Office collaborated with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and other partners on a knowledge share fair on gender equality in the extractive industries. On 16 and 17 October, in Nairobi, my Special Envoy joined ICGLR and UN-Women in organizing a regional forum to explore ways in which small and medium-sized enterprises in the region could benefit from the Conference. Together with various partners, the Office of my Special Envoy also organized private and public road shows to promote the Conference and attract global investors at key high-level events in Belgium, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. My Special Envoy also convened several meetings of the Steering Committee of the Conference, which was established in September 2015 to oversee preparations for the Conference. Furthermore, he held meetings with Congolese government officials, including President Joseph Kabila, Prime Minister Matata Ponyo and Minister for Foreign Affairs Raymond Tshibanda.

38. On 24 February, I joined President Joseph Kabila at the opening ceremony of the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. In my address, I underscored the importance of combining peace consolidation efforts with initiatives to rebuild the economic fabric of communities and provide tangible peace dividends for all. I also called upon the leaders of the region to work together towards inclusive development and shared prosperity. Panel discussions focused on opportunities and challenges in the seven economic sectors highlighted for investment, namely, agriculture, energy, finances, infrastructure, information and communications technologies, mining and tourism. Experts led plenary sessions on promoting responsible business and improving the investment climate in the Great Lakes region. Many business-to-business, government-to-business and government-to-government meetings took place in the margins of the Conference, notably a meeting between the Prime Ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. My Special Envoy will follow up with Framework signatories, witnesses/guarantors and other partners to establish or strengthen mechanisms to build on the outcomes of the Conference.

B. Support to dialogue processes in the region

39. From 2 to 10 December 2015, at my request, my Special Envoy visited Kinshasa, Brussels and Addis Ababa, where he conducted broad consultations regarding the proposed national dialogue to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Kinshasa, he met with senior government officials, including President Kabila, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the National Assembly. He also met with representatives of the presidential majority, opposition leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society, members of the Security Council, other members of the diplomatic corps and Framework signatories. In addition, my Special Envoy separately met with leaders of the opposition party Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and senior representatives of the European Union. During his meetings, my Special Envoy

sought to clarify his interlocutors' expectations regarding the role of a possible United Nations facilitator of the proposed dialogue. He further sought their views on the prospects for a credible and inclusive dialogue in the country's current political context. My Special Envoy subsequently summarized the findings and outcomes of his consultations in a report that he submitted to me. Subsequently, the African Union appointed Edem Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo, to serve as facilitator of the national dialogue. The Office of my Special Envoy and MONUSCO will support the African Union facilitation as needed.

C. Cooperation with regional partners

40. On 21 September 2015, my Special Envoy met with the President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Georges Chicoti, in Luanda. Discussions focused on issues of importance in the Great Lakes region, notably the neutralization of negative forces; the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi; and ongoing efforts to strengthen the functioning of the governance structures of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. President dos Santos suggested the holding of a high-level meeting to address the slow progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the neutralization of FDLR.

41. To strengthen the governing mechanisms of the Framework and enhance the partnership of his Office with the African Union Commission, my Special Envoy met the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, on 25 November. With regard to the governing mechanisms of the Framework, Ms. Dlamini-Zuma called for greater involvement by the Ministers responsible for the implementation of decisions made by the Heads of State and Government. She called on the United Nations, the African Union, ICGLR and SADC, as witnesses/guarantors, to conduct an assessment of the Framework, with a view to making results-oriented recommendations to advance its implementation.

42. My Special Envoy also built on his partnerships with the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the region during the reporting period. During an extraordinary meeting of ICGLR Ministers of Defence, held in Kinshasa on 18 November, my Special Envoy conveyed strong United Nations support for the full and rapid implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, as well as for initiatives aimed at neutralizing negative forces operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 11 February 2016, my Special Envoy participated in a meeting of ICGLR Ministers for Foreign Affairs (also known as Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee), during which he reiterated United Nations support to member States in addressing ongoing peace and security challenges in the region, notably the situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also briefed the meeting on preparations for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference and recalled the recommendations adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Framework signatory States during their meeting in Addis Ababa on 28 January.

D. Regional strategic framework in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

43. The Office of my Special Envoy continued to collaborate with United Nations country teams, regional offices and development partners to establish a regional strategic framework for the Great Lakes region. The integrated approach taken in the framework will, inter alia, help relevant agencies provide timely and more effective responses to crises in the region. The strategic framework comprises six pillars, namely: (a) sustainable natural resources management; (b) economic integration, cross-border trade and food nutrition security; (c) mobility; (d) youth and adolescents; (e) sexual and gender-based violence; and (f) justice and conflict prevention.

44. In this context, my Special Envoy, together with the United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, and Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group for Africa, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, convened a meeting in Nairobi on 7 December 2015 to validate the regional strategic framework. The meeting brought together United Nations resident coordinators in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; United Nations regional directors; country representatives of agencies, funds and programmes; heads of subregional organizations; and representatives of regional organizations, including ICGLR, EAC, SADC, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

45. The participants in the meeting concluded that the strategic framework had passed the test of relevance, resilience and implementability. They further noted that national budgets, development plans and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks should be aligned with the strategic framework. They also urged other signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to emulate the national implementation mechanisms in place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The meeting recommended that United Nations country teams in the region collaborate on cross-border initiatives that leverage comparative advantages and meet the region's needs in the areas of confidence-building and promotion of shared prosperity. In the same vein, the need for better collaboration and synergies with regional organizations was highlighted.

E. Promotion of women, youth and civil society organizations

46. During the reporting period, the Office of my Special Envoy undertook a field mission to monitor the activities of grass-roots women's organizations that were funded through the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These organizations are located in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The outcome of the mission included the following recommendations: (a) stabilization and peace consolidation initiatives in the region should tap the significant potential of groups and individuals at the community level; (b) local communities should be informed about the outcomes of high-level meetings related to the Framework; (c) the Framework signatories should widely disseminate their commitments and related activities in local languages at the community level; and (d) grass-roots women's organizations should participate in regional meetings discussing the Framework, as well as national peace and dialogue processes.

47. On 30 November 2015, my Special Envoy chaired the fourth meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework via videoconference. In attendance was my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as representatives of UN-Women, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Oak Foundation, MONUSCO, the Fonds pour les femmes congolaises, the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children's Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum. The meeting commended the field monitoring exercise. With regard to funding for the Women's Platform, Advisory Board members noted that current funding had been exhausted and called for collective action to mobilize new resources under my Special Envoy's leadership.

48. On 16 and 17 October 2015, the Office of my Special Envoy, ICGLR, the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry and UN-Women jointly organized a Regional Forum for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises from the Great Lakes region. The Forum brought together more than 50 representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Participants discussed how small and medium-sized enterprises could participate in the Great Lakes Regional Private Sector Forum and the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference, as well as how they could support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Participants underscored the important role of small and medium-sized enterprises in generating jobs and transformative economic initiatives for the benefit of women and youth in the Great Lakes region.

49. On 14 and 15 December 2015, the ICGLR Regional Civil Society Forum organized the first meeting of its newly constituted Coordination Committee, in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania. The meeting brought together the Chairs of the ICGLR National Civil Society Forums of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, along with representatives from Burundi, the Central African Republic and the ICGLR Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance. At the end of the two-day meeting, the Coordination Committee agreed to submit a request to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to host the secretariat of the Forum.

50. My Special Envoy also continued to engage non-State actors in support of the Framework. On 27 January 2016, he met with civil society representatives in Addis Ababa during a meeting organized by Oxfam International, before the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the African Union Executive Council. The meeting offered my Special Envoy an opportunity to engage directly with advocacy groups and other non-governmental actors involved in the promotion of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. This year's discussion centred on ways to facilitate genuine dialogue between civil society, women, youth and leaders at local, national and regional levels to promote, peace, stability and development.

F. Promotion of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

51. Protracted forced displacement remains a major challenge in the region, owing to political instability and the activities of armed groups, which force civilians to become internally displaced persons or refugees. At the same time, persistent

insecurity remains a significant impediment to the implementation of durable solutions for the displaced in the subregion. Recognizing that durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons will require concerted efforts by political, humanitarian and development partners, my Special Envoy has continued to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank and others to develop new solutions to protracted displacement that safeguard the dignity of displaced persons and provide them better opportunities, while delivering greater benefits to host communities.

V. Observations and recommendations

52. Notwithstanding some positive developments during the reporting period, the Great Lakes region continues to face major political, security and humanitarian challenges. I am particularly preoccupied by the continuing existence of several armed groups, including FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite efforts by FARDC and MONUSCO to neutralize them. The continued threat to civilians by armed groups, the stalled repatriation of ex-M23 combatants and dependants, the slow implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the crisis in Burundi remain sources of tension between Governments in the region.

53. I urge the signatory States to fully implement their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the objective of which is to tackle the root causes of instability in the region. In this regard, a top priority should be to decisively conclude the neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Effective military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO would go a long way toward realizing this important objective. Once again, I commend the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and FARDC for their sacrifices and their actions against armed groups. I welcome the arrangement reached on 28 January 2016 for the resumption of military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO and look forward to its implementation.

54. Renewed commitment and efforts will be required by all Member States in order to address the impact of negative forces and the challenges discussed in the present report. I urge the signatory States to abide by their commitments under the Framework, in particular the commitment to "neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups" (see S/2013/131, annex). In this regard, I am deeply troubled by repeated allegations of recruitment, training and infiltration of Burundian rebel groups in neighbouring countries. I encourage ICGLR member States to investigate and address these allegations through existing regional mechanisms, such as the Extended Joint Verification Mechanism. I encourage the Governments of the region, particularly those of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, to bilaterally address the security challenges confronting their countries, particularly issues related to armed groups and the repatriation of ex-M23. I welcome the reports of improved judicial cooperation between the States of the region and trust that efforts to fight impunity will intensify in the months and years ahead. My Special Envoy remains available to support these efforts.

55. The situation in Burundi remains a major source of concern in the absence of an inclusive political dialogue. I deplore the continued loss of life and urge all Burundians, especially security and defence forces, to exercise maximum restraint. I

urge the Burundian authorities to protect the rights of all Burundians and ensure that human rights teams from the African Union and the United Nations are able to carry out independent investigations in an expeditious manner. I encourage all concerned stakeholders to engage in a genuine, inclusive dialogue. I commend President Museveni of Uganda for his efforts in this regard and the Governments of Angola and the United Republic of Tanzania, for their support. As demonstrated by the visit of the Security Council to Burundi in January and my own visit in February, the United Nations, together with EAC and the African Union, will continue to assist the people of Burundi and provide technical and political support to mediation efforts in order to return the country to the path of stability and development.

56. The past six months have seen a number of electoral processes in the Great Lakes region. Elections will continue to be held in the region over the next two years, and the risk of attendant instability cannot be ruled out. Electoral processes must take place in a fair, transparent, inclusive and non-violent manner. I call on national authorities in the region to make it a priority to prevent human rights violations and outbreaks of violence before, during and after elections. At the same time, I urge the people of the region to refrain from using violence to resolve electoral disputes and to engage in constructive dialogue with their Governments instead.

57. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is entering a crucial period marked by preparations for a national dialogue ahead of upcoming general elections. I reiterate my call for any dialogue to be inclusive and enable stakeholders to discuss contentious issues in a climate of openness and mutual respect. I urge all Congolese to commit to resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations, with a view to creating the conditions for peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in an environment that provides adequate political space and in which human rights are respected. I express the full support of the United Nations for the former Prime Minister of Togo, Edem Kodjo, in his role as facilitator of the national dialogue.

58. Progress in economic cooperation will no doubt contribute significantly to peace and confidence-building in the region. The just-concluded Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference was held at an opportune moment, as it came in the wake of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I welcome this important initiative, which sets the stage for a new era of economic integration in the region. I commend my Special Envoy, ICGLR, the signatory States, and the witnesses/guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for their continued commitment to the Framework.

59. I encourage the Governments of the region to create an environment conducive to business and investments that are responsible, sustainable and aligned with the Framework, the United Nations Global Compact and other pertinent instruments. This is essential for long-term economic growth and confidence-building. I call on African private sector leaders to strengthen productive capacity, create decent jobs and livelihoods, improve economic governance and foster inclusive development and shared prosperity to ensure durable peace and development. I call on international partners to help integrate the region into international value chains that transform the nature of exports from raw materials to value-added exports. Furthermore, I invite business leaders and investors worldwide to join the people of the Great Lakes region in building bridges to regional integration that will create larger markets and pools of resources.

60. I welcome the efforts of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Technical Support Committee to reinvigorate the governing structures of the Framework and strengthen the signatories' ownership. These efforts should now be translated into concrete actions and deliverables. I am glad that the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of signatory States and the guarantors of the Framework, at their meeting in Addis Ababa on 28 January, endorsed the recommendations made by the Technical Support Committee to operationalize the decisions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

61. Lastly, I thank my Special Envoy and his Office for their continuous efforts to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Framework in a challenging regional context. I call upon the Security Council and the international community to remain engaged and assist the signatory States with the implementation of their commitments.